

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANILA 03948 061424 Z

45

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 AID-20

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/142 W

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R 060944 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4300

INFO DEPT DEFENSE

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC

CINCPACREPPHIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 3948

DEFENSE FOR DIA ALSO

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: RP, PINS, MARR

SUBJECT: GOP SEEKS NEW OPTIONS IN MUSLIM STRIFE

REF: ( A ) MANILA 3645

( B ) MANILA 3773 ( NOTAL )

BEGIN SUMMARY: VIOLENCE OF CONFLICT IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES  
APPEARS SLACKENED SOMEWHAT, WITH MUSLIM INSURGENTS RE-  
MAINING IN FORCE AND DOMINANT IN CONSIDERABLE AREAS OF  
MINDANAO AND SULU ISLANDS. PUBLIC GOP INITIATIVES  
OF PAST WEEK HAVE SWUNG TOWARD RELIEF AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR MUSLIM AREAS, WITH ANNOUNCEMENT  
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PAGE 02 MANILA 03948 061424 Z

OF EXTENSIVE PLANS WHICH REMAIN TO BE IMPLEMENTED. IN SHORTER-RANGE EFFORTS, PRESIDENT MARCOS IS PLAYING DOWN MUSLIM/CHRISTIAN ASPECTS OF STRIFE, AND GOVT IS PROMOTING CALLS FOR PEACE BY OLD-LINE POLITICIANS OF DISTURBED AREAS. RESPONSE OF INSURGENT LEADERSHIP, WHOSE MOTIVATIONS AND LOYALTIES REMAIN OBSCURE, IS STILL TO BE DETERMINED. END SUMMARY

1. INTENSITY OF CONFLICT IN DISTURBED AREAS OF MINDANAO AND SULU APPEARS SLACKENED A BIT DURING PAST WEEK, ALTHOUGH CLASHES BETWEEN MUSLIM INSURGENTS AND PHILIPPINE ARMED FORCES (AFP) STILL REMAIN NUMEROUS. DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT HAVE BEEN REDUCED SOMEWHAT WITH AFP SEEKING TO MAKE MORE RATIONAL USE OF AIR AND NAVAL STRIKES.

2. THIS LEAVES MILITARY SITUATION PRETTY MUCH AS BEFORE. INSURGENTS GENERALLY HAVE RUN OF ALL NORTH COTABATO EXCEPT NORTHWESTERN ENCLAVE AROUND PARANG PORT AND COTABATO CITY AIRPORT. HEAVIEST MUSLIM CONCENTRATIONS ARE AROUND AND JUST SOUTH OF COTABATO CITY AND IN THE SOUTHEASTCORNER OF PROVINCE. SULU ARCHIPELAGO REMAINS LARGELY REBEL TERRITORY WITH GOP FORCES HOLED UP IN URBAN CENTERS AND A FEW DEFENSIVE POSITIONS ON TAWITAWI, JOLO AND BASILAN ISLANDS. DISTURBANCES IN TWO ZAMBOANGAN PROVINCES ARE SPOTTY BUT INSURGENTS REMAIN CONCENTRATED NEAR PAGADIAN CITY, THE ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR CAPITAL, AFP OFFICER BRIEFING DAO APRIL 6 ALSO REPORTED THAT INSURGENTS HAVE ESTABLISHED A HOSPITAL IN NORTH COTABATO AND TRAINING CAMP IN ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR.

3. GOVERNMENT HAS LAUNCHED ITS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR MUSLIM AREAS (SEE REF B) WITH CONSIDERABLE FANFARE. PRESS REPORTS THAT EXECUTIVE SECRETARY MELCHOR IS HEADING TASK FORCE ENCOMPASSING SECRETARIES OF PUBLIC WORKS, FINANCE, DEFENSE, SOCIAL WELFARE, AGRICULTURE AND HEALTH, AND COMMANDING GENERAL OF MINDANAO TROUBLE AREA. TASK FORCE FUNCTION IS TO ASSESS DAMAGE, PLAN FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVISE STRATEGY TO RESTORE PEACE AND ORDER. GOP HAS ALSO ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR EXTENSIVE HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION IN BOTH COTABATO PROVINCES, TO BEGIN SOON. FINALLY, THERE IS ANNOUNCEMENT THAT AN AFP

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PAGE 03 MANILA 03948 061424 Z

PIONEER ENGINEERING BATTALION WILL ASSIST BOTH IN

RECONSTRUCTION AND RURAL ELECTRIFICATION PROJECTS IN DISTURBED AREAS. AFP OFFICER TOLD DAO THAT BATTALION INCLUDES A LARGE PROPORTION OF MUSLIM OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN, RECENTLY TRANSFERRED TO IT FROM OTHER UNITS.

4. GOP HAS ALSO ANNOUNCED SEVERAL SHORTER- RANGE PLANS FOR STABILIZING SITUATION. FUNDS, IN RELATIVELY SMALL AMOUNTS, ARE TO BE RELEASED TO COTABATO ( NORTH) PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT. FOOD FOR WORK PROGRAM IS TO BE INSTITUTED IN SEVERAL REFUGEE CAMPS. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, APPREHENSIVE OFFICIALS FROM SOUTH COTABATO, A LARGELY CHRISTIAN PROVINCE, WERE ASSURED BY PRESIDENT MARCOS THAT AFP WOULD PROVIDE ADDITIONAL AMMUNITION AND WEAPONS TO POLICE OF LOCALITIES ADJOINING INSURGENT AREAS.

5. GOP ALSO PROMOTING POLITICAL INITIATIVES TOWARD MUSLIMS. PRESIDENT MARCOS HAS SOUGHT TO PLAY DOWN COMMUNAL AND RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF SRIFE BY DEPICTING INSURGENTS AS INCLUDING BOTH MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS, WITH GOVT SUPPORTERS SIMILARLY MIXED. RECENT MEETING IN COTABATO BROUGHT TOGETHER PROVINCIAL POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT, INCLUDING SOME LONG- TIME ENEMIES, AND ELICITED PLEDGES TO SUPPORT PACIFICATION. SIMILARLY MEETING NOW PLANNED FOR EQUALLY ANTAGONISTIC POLITICIANS OF LANA O PROVINCES. ALSO, GOVT IS PROMISING LOCAL LEADERS, AND PARTICULARLY MUSLIM PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS, THE LARGER ROLE IN PACIFICATION EFFORTS WHICH MILITARY IS NOW FILLING.

6. COMMENT: HOW DISSIDENTS WILL RESPOND TO GOP INDUCEMENTS IS STILL TO BE SEEN. THEIR INTENTIONS AND CAPABILITIES STILL LARGELY UNKNOWN DUE TO THEIR UNWILLINGNESS TO COME OUT INTO OPEN TO PARLEY, OR EVEN TO TALK TO FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS. APPARENTLY GOP HAS ONLY VAGUE APPRECIATION OF INSURGENT COMMAND STRUCTURE, WHICH SOME REPORTS INDICATE IS FORMED OF A COLLECTION OF LEADERS IN A CENTRAL COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION, AT LEAST IN MINDANAO, WHILE APPARENTLY A MUCH LOOSER ARRANGEMENT EXISTS IN BASILAN AND THE SULUS. EVEN THE TRADITIONAL MUSLIM LEADERS, WHO HAVE GIVEN DUBIOUS ASSURANCES OF

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PAGE 04 MANILA 03948 061424 Z

SUPPORT TO THE GOVT, SEEM UNABLE TO ESTABLISH FRUITFUL CONTACT WITH THE DISSIDENT CHIEFS.

7. WHILE PRESS REPORTS SPEAK AS IF ASSISTANCE AND DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS ARE ALREADY UNDERWAY, THESE CONSIST

( APART FROM RELIEF ACTIVITY) MOSTLY OF ENTHUSIASTIC EXPRESSIONS OF INTENTIONS AND GENERALIZED PLANS WHICH WILL REQUIRE TIME, MONEY, EQUIPMENT, TECHNICAL EXPERTISE AND EXTENSIVE EFFORT, IN PRESUMABLY PACIFIED AREAS, TO IMPLEMENT. MUSLIMS HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO THESE PROMISES OF AID BEFORE AND ARE LIKELY TO BE RATHER SKEPTICAL UNTIL PROOF OF THESE INTENTIONS IS PRODUCED.  
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**TAGS:** MARR, PINS, RP  
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CANBERRA  
CINCPAC  
DEPT DEFENSE  
EA  
JAKARTA  
KUALA LUMPUR

SECSTATE WASHDC  
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